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## THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE STANDARDIZATION OF SERA AND SEROLOGICAL TESTS

The second international conference of the Health Committee, for the standardization of sera and serological tests, recently held in Paris under the auspices of the League of Nations, achieved far-reaching and significant results.

It seems peculiarly fitting that exactly one hundred years after the birth of Pasteur, representatives from twelve different nations should have gathered together at the invitation of the Institute that bears his name, in the interests of science and humanity. The work of the conference was assigned to subcommittees, the meetings of which were so scheduled that it was possible to attend practically all of them. The informal discussion leading up to the final conclusions was most illuminating and stimulating for research in the broad field of infection and immunity quite apart from the definite results obtained.

It has long been realized that the introduction of uniformity into the methods used by different laboratories for measuring and testing the strength of sera would facilitate further research, besides advancing the practical application of the great achievements in the problem of immunization, but for many years all attempts in this direction met with an insurmountable obstacle in the lack of prolonged and close international coöperation. It was not until after the war that the Health Organization of the League of Nations succeeded in uniting and coördinating the efforts of many separate institutions in different countries. A program of joint work was drawn up at the first conference held in London in December, 1921, and a further advance has been made at the second conference, the success of which was in large measure due to the chairman, Professor Madsen, whose wonderful tact and foresight invariably harmonized seemingly conflicting points of view.

The adoption of the American unit for antidiphtheria serum as the international standard will clear away the confusion which the necessity of transposing

the different unit values has so long entailed. As is well known, the American unit is in principle based upon the original method of Ehrlich.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, the accepted approximation of the American unit for antitetanus serum will greatly aid in clarifying future study. In order to secure complete uniformity it will only be necessary for America to double the value of its present unit or, until this can be accomplished, to indicate on the label of the serum that two American units equal one international unit.

It was not apparently possible to reach definite conclusions in the standardization of other methods but the acceptance of the protection test and, in particular, of the methods of the American investigators, Cole, Dochez and Avery, at the Rockefeller Hospital, as a basis for the standardization of antipneumococcus serum marks an important step toward uniformity. Although the results of research on antimeningococcus and antidysentery sera, as well as on the sero-diagnosis of syphilis, were collated, the interest of medical science will be directed rather to the more practical results in the diagnosis of syphilis which will undoubtedly be forthcoming at the next conference, when it will be possible to consider the reports of comparative tests upon the same specimens of blood to be made by five representative laboratories in Austria, Belgium, England, France, and Germany. Thus, not actual accomplishment alone but also promise of increasing coöperation in the future marks the recent occasion as one of twofold significance.

One of the most gratifying aspects of this international gathering was the real and friendly interest in American science evinced by so many of the European representatives individually. The discouraging economic situation in Europe with all its hampering effect on medical science there, the development of great American institutions for research and the real contributions they have made, together with the work of the International Health Board of the Rockefeller Foundation which now reaches out to all parts of the civilized world, have all served to direct attention to America. We should embrace this great opportunity for coöperation, should recognize and assume all our responsibilities, bearing in mind the fact that the inspiration for our work has come from the genius of the older civilization, while patiently awaiting the time when political discussion shall cease to be a barrier to progress and the search for scientific truth.

A. B. W.

1. "The unit is based on the one established by Ehrlich, and has been made by comparison with the normal serum sent to this laboratory by the Kgl. Pr. Institut für experimentelle Therapie, Frankfurt a. M., Germany."

"As this standard is based upon the one established by Ehrlich, the principles involved and the methods employed are practically a reproduction of his work." Hygienic Laboratory Bulletin No. 21, April, 1905.



***Make your plans now to attend the Annual Meeting  
at Boston, October 8th to 11th.***